United Nations

Committee on Information

Report on the twenty-second session (1-12 May 2000)

General Assembly
Official Records
Fifty-fifth session
Supplement No. 21 (A/55/21)

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Chapter I
Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In paragraph 2 of section I of its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly",

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group,[1] reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67 members. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to fifty-first sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee[2] and its recommendations and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in its resolution 34/182 (Assembly resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 A and B, 43/60 A and B, 44/50, 45/76 A and B, 46/73 B, 47/73 B, 48/44 B, 49/38 B, 50/31 B and 51/138 B). At its fifty-second session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[3] and adopted consensus resolutions 52/70 A and B of 10 December 1997. At its fifty-third session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[4] and adopted consensus resolutions 53/59 A and B of 3 December 1998. At its fifty-fourth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[5] and adopted consensus resolutions 54/82 A and B of 6 December 1999.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 members, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 78 to 79 members, and appointed Burkina Faso as a member of the Committee.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79

to 81 members, and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 83 members, and appointed Gabon and Israel as members of the Committee.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88 members, and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members of the Committee.

10. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 members, and appointed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a member of the Committee.

11. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90 members, and appointed Georgia as a member of the Committee.

12. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 90 to 93 members, and appointed Angola, the Republic of Moldova and Solomon Islands as members of the Committee.

13. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 93 to 95 members, and appointed Liberia and Mozambique as members of the Committee.

14. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zimbabwe

Chapter II
Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

15. The organizational meeting of the twenty-second session of the Committee on Information was held on 1 May 2000 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Committee, Elhassane Zahid (Morocco).

B. Election of officers

16. To fill the unexpired terms of Rapporteur and Vice-Chairman, the Committee elected by acclamation Yayan G. H. Mulyana (Indonesia), who had been nominated by the Asian Group and Alejandra Martha Ayuso (Argentina), who had been nominated by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, respectively. The officers of the Committee on

Information for the period 1999-2000 are thus as follows:

Chairman:
Elhassane Zahid (Morocco)

Vice-Chairpersons:
Alejandra Martha Ayuso (Argentina)
Ivan Nimac (Croatia)
Peter Mollema (Netherlands)

Rapporteur:
Yayan G. H. Mulyana (Indonesia)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

17. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted its agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2000/1 and Rev.1), as orally revised by the Chairman:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Statement by the Chairman.
5. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
6. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.
7. General debate and consideration of substantive questions.
8. Consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General.
9. Informal consultations in the open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.
10. Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

18. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its twenty-second session at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 12 May 2000.

19. For consideration of items 7 and 8, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on:

(a) Reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2000/2);

(b) Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: a case-by-case review (A/AC.198/2000/3);

(c) Guidelines for the functioning of United Nations information centres integrated with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (A/AC.198/2000/4);

(d) United Nations information centres in 1999: allocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations (A/AC.198/2000/5);

(e) Development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations: progress report on the pilot project (A/AC.198/2000/6);

(f) Multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations web sites (A/AC.198/2000/7-A/AC.172/2000/4);

(g) Proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005: programme 23, Public information (A/AC.198/2000/8);

(h) Activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 1999 (A/AC.198/2000/9);

(i) Millennium promotional campaign (A/AC.198/2000/10).

D. Observers

20. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Azerbaijan, Lesotho, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and United Arab Emirates. The Holy See also participated as an observer.

21. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also participated as observers: International Labour Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization and World Intellectual Property Organization. The United Nations

Correspondents Association and the World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows also took part in the session as observers.

E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day

22. On 3 May 2000, the Committee observed World Press Freedom Day 2000, organized by the Department of Public Information. The programme, entitled "Reporting the news in a dangerous world: the role of media in conflict settlement, reconciliation and peace-building", celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Department's Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries. Several past participants in the Programme were panellists.

F. Other matters

23. The Chairman informed the Committee that Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had requested to become members of the Committee on Information.

Chapter III
General debate and consideration of substantive questions

24. Statements during the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Colombia (on behalf of the Rio Group), Croatia, Cuba, Egypt, Gabon, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica (on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community), Japan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands (on behalf of the States members of the Western European and Other States Group), Nigeria (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Pakistan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

25. The Director of the International Programme for the Development of Communication of UNESCO addressed the Committee, as did the President of the United Nations Correspondents Association and the representative of the World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows.

26. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, all speakers pointed to the important commemoration of World Press Freedom Day. Many delegations paid tribute to the journalists around the world who had lost their lives or suffered injuries in the line of duty, and condemned the use of violence against them. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, said that it should be remembered that without an independent and critical media corps, the United Nations would not be able to do its work in helping to resolve crises and conflicts. The same speaker, quoting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, noted that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". Other speakers criticized all attempts to control or influence the media. Many speakers pointed to the important role that the media could play in improving the quality of life of people everywhere. The President of the United Nations Correspondents Association said that no democratic society could exist without press freedom. He also called for further improvement of the working conditions of the working press at Headquarters.

27. Many speakers called for a new, more just and effective global information and communications order. They agreed that, in recent years, tremendous innovations had been made in the field of information technology, which had transformed all areas of human activity. However, according to one delegation, while the flow of information was a global phenomenon, the spread of information technology remained restrictive in nature. According to one speaker, state-of-the-art advances in mass communications, the Internet in particular, had rendered the world a neighbourhood, but not a community. Many delegations were of the view that the gulf was widening between developed and developing countries. One speaker, representing a large group, questioned to what extent the developing countries were able to supply the information highway with news and perspectives relevant to their interests. If their access did not improve, they would remain passengers on that highway rather than becoming drivers. On the subject of international information security, one speaker expressed concern about inherent risks in the new information technologies, such as the danger of an erosion of the identity of nations and a standardization of culture, and pointed to the need for enabling safe information exchange on an equal basis.

28. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, expressed the view that information was the reservoir of common experience of all for the benefit of all and, to that end, a number of delegations agreed that the United Nations had an important role to play in bridging the digital divide. A number of speakers suggested that the Department of Public Information could assist developing countries in improving their capacity in the information field, particularly through the United Nations information centres and training programmes for journalists and also through working with Governments in developing countries on United Nations courses for educational curricula. Several speakers also noted the important work being done by UNESCO through its International Programme for the Development of Communication. One delegation, speaking for a large group, noted that some ideas on information policy that were rooted in the more distant past had become obsolete, and new ways to ensure the goals of freedom of opinion and expression must be found.

29. One speaker observed that the role of information and communication technologies in development was under serious consideration by the Economic and Social Council and would be taken up by the Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000. However, despite its potential for human development, there was an unequal pace and spread of the information and communication technologies, and there was an urgent need to rectify that situation. Another speaker supported the call by the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) for a broad discussion of the issue of strengthening the information and communications capacity of the United Nations system.

30. In addressing the public information policies of the United Nations, all delegations expressed support for the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, which had been initiated by the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of public information and as an important part of his efforts to create a culture of communication within the Organization. One speaker noted that the United Nations had to be both competent and competitive in the worldwide race for transmitting information, and delegations commended the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and his staff to carry out their activities with increased efficiency and effectiveness. All agreed that the Department was making great strides in maximizing its outreach capabilities, at a time when the demands being placed on it outpaced available resources. Speakers expressed their appreciation for the many useful reports before the Committee, which had been circulated in a timely manner and would be discussed in more detail later in the session. One delegation regretted the delay in their issuance in all official languages. Many delegations mentioned the value they attached to the work of the Committee on Information in guiding the Department in its work and to the spirit of cooperation and consensus that existed among members.

31. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, agreed with the steps taken so far to ensure that United Nations public information activities would help to build a broad-based global support for the Organization. Another delegation, speaking for a large group, noted that reform meant moving away from trying to "do it all" towards developing new strategies and approaches. This speaker was joined by another in expressing the opinion that the Department should review its policies as part of the continuing reorientation process in order to prioritize its activities, and should decide upon the most effective mix of media to be used. Several delegations pointed to the new United Nations News Service as a key component of an enhanced media outreach strategy. One speaker noted that a large segment of humanity lacked awareness about the United Nations. A number of delegations emphasized that the Department's reorientation exercise must maintain and improve its activities in areas of special interest to developing countries in order to meet the aspirations of the people there. Many speakers called for programmes to address the special needs of the African continent, and some delegations requested that the interests of the countries in transition be taken into consideration in information programmes.

32. All speakers supported the determination on the part of the United Nations to empower and reposition itself in the new millennium as a body capable of meeting a wide range of challenges and of serving people everywhere more effectively. They agreed that the Millennium Assembly and Summit provided a unique opportunity to publicize the activities of the Organization with renewed vigour and maximize its exposure in the symbolically important year 2000. A number of delegations supported the millennium promotional campaign, which they thought to be

important and timely, and they appreciated the Department's initiative in planning and promoting a campaign that would both publicize the events and use the opportunity of the millennium to better connect the peoples of the world to the United Nations. Many speakers expressed support for the slogan "The UN works", which would illustrate the achievements of the Organization in different fields; they agreed that it should be a key element in a long-term information strategy, which would capture the momentum of the millennium. One delegation, on behalf of a large group, requested that the Havana Declaration and Programme of Action be circulated as part of the documentation for the Millennium Assembly, and that the Department assist the Group of 77 in the implementation of the programme. One delegation urged the Department to adopt measures to help implement the goals put forward in the Secretary-General's millennium report, and pointed specifically to the proposed global commitment to poverty reduction in Africa. One speaker observed that the chronic insolvency of the Organization meant that it could not respond effectively to the developmental aspirations of the majority of its members, and he hoped the Millennium Summit would provide the impetus for placing the Organization on a sound financial footing. Adequate resources were required, he said, to accomplish its tasks, the first and foremost being the promotion of sustained growth and development in developing countries.

33. All speakers supported the Department's use of new information technologies, in particular the United Nations web site, to widely disseminate the message of the Organization. At the same time, they strongly urged the continued use of the traditional media — print, radio and television — in outreach activities, since, clearly, all parts of the world were not benefiting equally from technological innovations. Many delegations stressed the importance of radio to the developing countries in terms of its outreach and cost-effectiveness. Several delegations noted that the Department was proposing an integrated multimedia news operation, aimed at delivery of United Nations news directly to media organizations worldwide, which they expected would improve access for developing countries.

34. All speakers commended the Department for its important work in maintaining and enriching the United Nations web site despite the fact that progress was being made within existing resources. Several noted the remarkable number of hits recorded at the web site, which was a clear indication of the tremendous interest in the Organization worldwide. Another delegation was heartened by the growing number of accesses to the web site from users in the developing countries. One speaker pointed to the new Millennium web page, which was important for the millennium promotional campaign, and another congratulated the Department for including links to pages devoted to the United Nations and civil society and the United Nations and business. Several delegations praised the United Nations news centre on the web site. One speaker stressed the need for accuracy in the informational content of the United Nations web site in view of the omnivorous character of the Internet and its rules of speed and immediacy. Another noted that objectivity was paramount and that the use of information for political purposes was not acceptable. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, said that parliamentary documentation and the United Nations treaty collection should be freely available on the web site.

35. All speakers supported the multilingual enrichment of the United Nations web site. Many noted that there had been significant progress in achieving greater parity in all six official languages. One delegation pointed in particular to the enhanced Arabic site, while others called for further promotion of the Arabic language in all information output. Several speakers pointed to the welcome fact that three posts relating to the Arabic, Chinese and Russian web sites had been made permanent. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, noted that full modular parity for all official languages remained the ultimate objective, and urged the Department to follow that approach in a cost-effective manner and with a focus on textual content. Another speaker called for more study of the matter, and strongly restated his position against that approach. One delegation thought that the goal of language parity must be measured against the two key criteria of increased accessibility and cost-effectiveness, and was of the view that there were other issues of equal or greater importance for consideration. Several speakers, including one speaking for a large group, supported the proposed feasibility study on restructuring the web site to become more user-friendly and flexible, if financed within existing resources. The latter speaker requested the Department to submit to the Committee at its twenty-third session draft

guidelines for the United Nations web site, with rules for content-planning and publication policies.

36. With respect to the traditional media, in particular radio, many speakers expressed their support for the launch of direct broadcasting by the United Nations and were pleased with the Department's efforts with regard to the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity. Several speakers welcomed the redeployment by the Department of resources from the approved programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 for this purpose. One delegation enquired whether the network of information centres could assist in the fund-raising efforts for the pilot project.

37. One delegation expressed special satisfaction with the results of the agreement established by the public radio network of his country and United Nations Radio, which allowed for information in Portuguese to reach a vast number of listeners through a receiving network. It also pointed to the number of Portuguese speakers in Africa, Asia and Europe, who also had access to the information compiled by the United Nations in New York, and called for another Portuguese-language producer to be added to United Nations Radio. One speaker noted that United Nations radio broadcasts in Bahasa Indonesian constituted the most effective means of communicating information to more than 200 million people in the respective region. Another speaker noted that the General Assembly, in its programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, had agreed to reinstate two posts for Kiswahili radio producers, and his delegation wished to see those posts filled. Another delegation, on behalf of a large group, called for full programming in French and Creole to Haiti by the Caribbean Radio Unit, which had yet to be fulfilled. Regarding the Department's television output, one speaker, on behalf of a large group, noted that the live feeds and other easily assembled raw materials for redisseminators were welcomed.

38. One speaker denounced the aggression perpetrated daily against his country through radio and television broadcasts emanating from another country, which were flagrant violations of international law and were illegal acts that were being committed using increasingly sophisticated technology, and demanded a cessation of that aggression.

39. One delegation noted that the press releases should bring out the intergovernmental aspect of the Organization's work. Another noted that it wished to see improvement in the access of delegations to information emanating from the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. One speaker commended the *UN Chronicle* and its new editorial approach.

40. All speakers stressed the importance of the work of the Department of Public Information in the area of sustainable human development, and several noted that the thematic information programmes were receiving wide publicity. They considered that continued and heightened focus should be given to publicizing the Organization's activities and accomplishments in such areas as poverty eradication, health, education, the rights of women and combating terrorism, drugs and international crime. One speaker endorsed the importance of thematic campaigns on human rights, noting that they were particularly important to people under foreign occupation or alien domination. Another speaker suggested that selective emphasis on a particular human right might not be desirable. One delegation welcomed the Department's work on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and another delegation called for emphasis on the International Year for the Culture of Peace, the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, and the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Several speakers noted that the special needs of the African countries were being recognized, and stressed that campaign themes should be reflective of international concerns on multilateral development cooperation and disarmament, especially the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, commended the Department for its efforts in promoting the Tenth Quadrennial United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and looked forward to similar coverage on the special sessions of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, as well as the World Conference against Racism and the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Two speakers expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Department to highlight the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe on a special page on the web site, with one suggesting that the page provide links to the local organizations concerned in Belarus. One

delegation called for appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the problems and needs of the Semipalatinsk region, which had been affected by nuclear tests, as called for by the General Assembly. One delegation thanked the Department for its valuable support in helping organize events to celebrate its 500th anniversary. One speaker welcomed and fully supported the Department's initiative on the organization of internship programmes, and several others strongly supported the annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

41. A number of delegations appreciated the efforts of the Department of Public Information to improve public awareness about United Nations peacekeeping and other political missions, and pointed to the importance of prompt information support for newly launched missions. Several speakers noted in particular the coverage on the United Nations web site of missions in East Timor and Kosovo. One delegation said that any future studies looking into the rapid deployment of public information means and equipment to new peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance activities must include measures to insulate the international response to such situations from any biases or distortions in the media coverage. Another observed that information activities to provide local populations with impartial and reliable information on the goals of a peace-restoration mission or a post-conflict peace-building process were important. He went on to say that the principle of impartiality should also apply to the coverage of peacekeeping operations, as it could enhance success and also personnel safety and security, and that cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was instrumental at the planning and implementation stages. In addition, his delegation placed great emphasis on the central role played by the Department of Public Information in the selection of spokespersons for United Nations missions.

42. A number of speakers expressed their appreciation for the information resources of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. One speaker observed that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library was becoming a virtual library with world outreach and was making United Nations information widely accessible electronically to a growing number of readers and users. However, he said, it was still necessary to build up the Library's strength in books and journals. Another speaker commended the efforts of the Library to redesign its services to take into account technological advances, and hoped that the training programme for permanent missions would be reinstated. One speaker strongly requested the Library to acquire an increased number of publications and periodicals from developing countries. One delegation, speaking also for a group, said that the recent launching of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) on the Internet (UNBISNET) was welcomed.

43. All delegations praised the work of the United Nations information centres, which in the words of one speaker represented the face of the United Nations in 65 countries around the world. One speaker said that for the Group of 77, the centres were a vital mechanism for United Nations outreach, and therefore the move to enhance their effectiveness through the integration process was supported. He noted that the guidelines for the functions of the centres integrated with the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were appreciated, and that additional information on the status of the respective centres on a regional basis, including levels of staffing and equipment, should be forthcoming. Many speakers agreed that integration was a positive process to pool resources and unify the Organization's image; however, they stressed that it should be done on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the host country. One delegation observed that coordination between UNDP and the information centres under the leadership of resident representatives was key to achieving the objectives of integration. Several speakers agreed that the functional autonomy of the information component should be preserved. Another speaker found unacceptable the operational guidelines for the integrated centres, which in his view appeared to reduce the autonomy of the national information officers. Several speakers said that the Secretary-General's review had indicated that in most cases the integration process did not adversely affect the performance of the centres, but the review process must be ongoing. One delegation requested that the Department of Public Information reconsider the integration process.

44. A number of delegations supported the strengthening of resources to the information centres for all their many information activities provided to local populations. One delegation emphasized that the

work of the information centres was particularly important in developing countries, where the access to information technology was still weak. Several speakers noted that information centres should make their facilities available for educational purposes, for example to help the public access new technologies. The staff of the centres should be trained in, among other things, the creation of web sites to adequately reflect the culture of the region. One speaker stressed the positive role being played by the United Nations Information Centre at Dakar, as well as the need for its strengthening. Another speaker noted that he could find no justification for the integration of the United Nations Information Centre at Dhaka, and elsewhere, based merely on financial constraints, and reiterated the need to restore that Centre's independent status and appoint a full-time director. One delegation reiterated the view that the United Nations Information Centre at New Delhi should continue to be headed by a full-time director at the D-1 level. Another pointed out that his country remained on the list of those wishing to host a United Nations information centre or information component. He looked forward to a progress report, and noted that such a centre or component could operate in conjunction with the UNDP office at Zagreb. The work of the United Nations Information Centre at Jakarta was greatly appreciated, according to another delegation. In its view, however, integration should be approached with caution, since recent surveys had indicated a lower level of programme delivery and fewer activities. One speaker, on behalf of a large group, commended the United Nations Information Centre at Port-of-Spain, and looked forward to more information on the proposed information component in the UNDP office at Kingston. One delegation said that his country attached great importance to the work being done by the United Nations Information Centre at Islamabad, stressing the need to further strengthen its effectiveness, and another paid tribute to the United Nations Information Centre at Sana'a.

45. At the end of the general debate, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information made a statement responding to some of the questions raised by delegations.

Chapter IV
Consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General

46. The nine reports of the Secretary-General were introduced by the Under-Secretary-General and senior staff members of the Department and were discussed individually by the Committee.

47. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2000/2), the Department reviewed key measures that it was taking to enhance the communications profile of the Organization in all regions of the world, through the increased use of new technology, and through initiatives such as the United Nations News Service and better coordination within the Secretariat. The Department said that it was in the difficult position of "doing more with less" because its mandates were expanding as available resources were being reduced. One delegation asked about the costs of conversion of television transmissions from analog to digital format, and was informed by the Department that it was an unavoidable capital expense, since the industry standard would be digital in five years. Another enquired about the income being generated for the Organization by the United Nations Treaty Series on-line, and was told that the figure was US$ 50,000 since 1 March 2000. In reply to a query about the millennium promotional campaign, the Department responded that this would be a unique opportunity to highlight all of the Organization's activities. One speaker asked for more emphasis on United Nations activities aimed at Africa, apart from the Security Council proceedings, and the Department pointed to the coverage being provided by *Africa Recovery*.

48. Concerning the note by the Secretary-General on the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/AC.198/2000/8), the Department highlighted its four subprogrammes. Several delegations expressed support for the objectives of the plan, although one speaker suggested that it would have been preferable if the objectives and expected accomplishments had been more precisely stated. The Department responded that the plan was by design as broad as possible, since it was a "road map" and not an exhaustive list of its every activity. One delegation asked whether the campaigns against acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and on natural disasters, such as

cyclones, could be strengthened. Another requested that dialogue among civilizations be included as a thematic priority in subprogramme 1 of programme 23, Public information, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.

49. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of JUNIC in 1999 (A/AC.198/2000/9), the Department noted that the desire to strengthen the culture of communications within the Organization was shared by all the specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system. The Department provided details of the plans for the United Nations system pavilion at the upcoming Hannover 2000 exposition, on the theme "Humankind, nature, technology". At the next session of JUNIC, the topics for consideration would include, among others, the use of television in transmitting the United Nations message and the millennium promotional campaign. Several delegations agreed that it would be helpful if more access to the informational materials from the United Nations pavilion could be provided, particularly for the benefit of those who would not have the opportunity to visit, to which the Department replied that a Web site was in preparation.

50. As to the report on the millennium promotional campaign (A/AC.198/2000/10), the Department noted that the campaign was the brainchild of the Committee. It had been developed to demonstrate that the United Nations made a difference in the daily lives of ordinary people, and consequently to increase public awareness and grass-roots support for the Organization. The aim of the slogan "The UN works" was to put a human face on United Nations outreach. The Department emphasized that the campaign had short- and long-term objectives, which were first to build momentum towards the Summit, and second to use the millennium for the launching of a long-term communications strategy. The campaign would deal with children's issues, among others, and the Department had been holding discussions with the United Nations Children's Fund. A number of speakers noted that their delegations had strong interest in the Millennium Summit and requested details on the media accreditation procedures. The Department reported that those instructions were being prepared and would be distributed shortly. The Department would also do its utmost to facilitate access for journalists during the Summit. One Committee member was concerned that some of the major promotional activities would take place only a few months before the Summit, in particular because summer was a "lean" news period. The Department noted that the campaign would be an ongoing one.

51. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites (A/AC.198/2000/7-A/AC.172/2000/4), the Department stressed that the Web site had grown as a supplement to rather than at the expense of traditional media. The Department hoped to automate many tasks to increase production and make more materials available. Also, in order to put the site on a sound footing, a feasibility study was required. One delegation requested statistics on the number of accesses for the Arabic Web site, which the Department agreed to provide. The same speaker hailed the newly converted permanent posts in the Web site operation as an indication of the Department's determination to enact General Assembly resolutions on language parity. Several delegations noted that they did not support option C-3 contained in the earlier report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/1999/9 and Corr.1 and 2) for achieving language parity, nor did they think that current usage levels should be given so much weight in the process. The Department observed that parity would be difficult to achieve; however, the first step was to ensure that the gap between language Web sites did not widen. Option C-3 was by no means the only viable one but had been proposed as a cost-effective measure.

52. In highlighting the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations: progress report on the pilot project" (A/AC.198/2000/6), the Department thanked delegations for the support they had given to the pioneering project to produce news in six languages every day. The Department said the project was part of its overall effort to provide United Nations information directly to media around the world, and would significantly increase the amount of information about the United Nations disseminated directly to audiences globally. It was emphasized that effective partnerships with broadcasters were required for the success of the effort since they would be the principal conduits for the broadcasts. Interest in the project had been exceptional among the radio stations that had responded, and the Department had redeployed $1.7 million for it from its approved budget for the current biennium. It was

expected that the first step in the project would begin in time for the Millennium Summit. In response to a question from one delegation about the content of the broadcasts, the Department replied that the traditional United Nations approach of broadcasting information that was meaningful to the people of individual regions would be used. One speaker was concerned at the low response to the survey from South Asia and said he would look into the matter. Several speakers said that they appreciated the efforts of the Department.

53. The Department introduced the three reports of the Secretary-General concerning the information centres, namely, on a case-by-case review of the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP (A/AC.198/2000/3), on guidelines for the functioning of United Nations information centres integrated with field offices of UNDP (A/AC.198/2000/4) and on the allocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations for information centres in 1999 (A/AC.198/2000/5). The Department emphasized that partnerships with host Governments and United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds in the field, especially UNDP, were critical to the effective operation of the centres. A number of delegations wished to have more details on the total allocation of resources to the centres, not just on the allocation of posts, and the Department undertook to provide that information. The Department also stressed that retrenchments in the United Nations had made it necessary to reduce information centre posts, although the hope was that some posts could be restored when possible. One delegation suggested that the guidelines seemed to diminish the role of the national information officers, but the Department replied that that was not the case since they worked as a team with the resident coordinators, who in many cases also served as centre directors. One speaker asked why the host country had not received a questionnaire for the information centre at Dhaka, and was informed by the Department that only centres that were integrated in 1992 had been included in the review, and the centre at Dhaka was not among them.

54. One delegation asked what the criteria were for appointing centre directors, and suggested that centres in Africa be headed by African nationals. The Department responded that the main criteria were appropriate communications skills; knowledge of the country/region; and appropriate language skills. The Department also confirmed that it was continuing to make efforts to appoint Africans to head centres in Africa. One country was concerned that sharing premises with UNDP often meant that centres would not be located centrally, making access difficult for students and others. The Department replied that those decisions were taken on a case-by-case basis, with access always being a prime consideration. One speaker asked if there had been thought given to moving the centre from Lagos to Nigeria's new capital, Abuja, and was told by the Department that that matter was being looked into, in consultation with the country team. Another delegation enquired about the development of Web sites by centres, and the Department replied that such development was done at the initiative of the individual centre. One speaker expressed distress at the overall 40 per cent reduction in staffing levels in the centres in the past decade.

Chapter V
Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session

55. At its sixth plenary meeting, on 12 May 2000, the Committee adopted by consensus its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, including the following two draft resolutions and draft decision:

Draft resolution A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[6]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[7]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the

public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[8] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations,

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, in which it established the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

2. *Expresses its concern* that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that most developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution, and, in this regard, underlines the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective;

3. *Welcomes* Liberia and Mozambique to membership in the Committee on Information;

4. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

5. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[9] and encourages him to continue the reorientation exercise, while stressing the need to take into account the views of Member States, and requests him to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session, in May 2001;

6. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being undertaken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities and the provision of resources for their implementation;

7. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation should contribute to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

8. *Takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General on the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005: programme 23, Public information,[10] and, emphasizing that the implementation of the broad objectives outlined in the proposal should be in accordance with the objectives set forth in relevant General Assembly resolutions regarding questions relating to information, requests the Secretary-General to proceed with the submission of the proposal to the Committee for Programme and Coordination for consideration, taking into account the amendments made by the Committee on Information at its twenty-second session, in accordance with section I of Assembly resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to focus, in particular, on educational institutions as key and indispensable partners of the United Nations in its efforts to fully inform the peoples of the world of its aims and activities;

10. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to further strengthen consultative arrangements between the Department of Public Information and other substantive departments of the Secretariat, in particular those dealing with development issues;

11. *Reaffirms* that United Nations information centres should continue to publicize United Nations activities and accomplishments in the areas of economic and social development, poverty eradication, debt relief, health, education, elimination of illiteracy, women's rights, children's rights, the plight of children in armed conflict, the sexual exploitation of children, the eradication of drug trafficking and environmental issues, as well as other issues of relevance;

12. *Welcomes* the contribution of the Department of Public Information to the efforts of the Secretary-General in closing the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department to further enhance its role;

13. *Recalls* its resolution 54/113 of 10 December 1999 concerning the proclamation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and encourages the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information with a view to disseminating information on and drawing international attention to the Dialogue among Civilizations and the impact it could have on promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation;

14. *Welcomes* the decision taken by the Department of Public Information to launch a new Web site to publicize the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and requests the Secretary-General to continue to implement a promotional campaign to ensure that the Year will enjoy the broadest international support and to report thereon and also on all follow-up activities in this respect to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session;

15. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/202 of 17 December 1998 and 54/254 of 15 March 2000, concerning the designation of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations and the convening, as an integral part of the Millennium Assembly, of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the millennium promotional campaign,[11] and encourages him to continue to implement effective public information programmes in this regard so as to ensure that the outcome of the Summit is widely disseminated and enjoys broad international support;

16. *Appreciates and encourages* the efforts of the Department of Public Information in disseminating information to Member States regarding the promotion of women 's rights and gender equality;

17. *Takes note with appreciation* of the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the formation and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peacekeeping and other field operations of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of such future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other substantive departments of the Secretariat;

18. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills for fulfilling the tasks of the operations or missions;

19. *Emphasizes* that all publications of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should fulfil an identifiable need, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

20. *Takes note* of the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Dag Hammarskjöld Library a virtual library with world outreach, making United Nations information and other acquired materials accessible electronically to a growing number of readers and users, and, at the same time, requests him to enrich the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, to ensure that it continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

21. *Welcomes* the development of the United Nations News Service by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations Web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

22. *Takes note* of the efforts of the Secretary-General in ensuring access for the representatives of Member States to the briefings organized at Headquarters by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General and in ensuring wider outreach of the outcome of such briefings, and requests him to consider taking further measures in this regard;

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that information presented to the media is made available to delegations fully and in a timely fashion;

24. *Reaffirms* the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres and information components in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information in all parts of the world, in particular in developing countries and countries in transition, and especially in those countries where there is need for a better understanding of United Nations activities;

25. *Also reaffirms* the importance of all United Nations information centres meeting the primary

objectives outlined by the Committee on Information in its report on its ninth session;[12]

26. *Emphasizes* that resources should be commensurate with the mandated programmes and activities of the United Nations information centres to ensure their full and effective implementation, expresses deep disappointment at the reduction of more than 40 per cent in the staffing of the information centres between the early and closing years of the last decade, and, in this context, acknowledges the generous contributions by several host Governments, as well as the partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations system and local partners, to maintain the present level of operations of the information centres;

27. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations information centres[13] and requests the Secretary-General to continue, if feasible and on a case-by-case basis, the integration policy in a cost-effective manner, taking into account the views of the host country to ensure that the information functions and the autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, to meet the policy's stated objective of improving the provision of information by the United Nations, and, in this regard, requests him to continue his efforts to address the problems that affect the centres;

28. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme,[14] requests him to implement the views and opinions of the host Governments concerned, as expressed in their replies to the questionnaire provided by the Secretariat, and also requests him to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session on the steps taken in this regard;

29. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the guidelines for the functioning of the United Nations information centres integrated with the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme;[15]

30. *Reaffirms* the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, invites the Secretary-General to make such recommendations as he may consider necessary regarding the establishment and location of such centres, and, in this regard, welcomes the requests by Croatia, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Jamaica and Kyrgyzstan for information centres or information components;

31. *Stresses* the need to revitalize the centres that are currently not operational, for which requests have already been made by the countries concerned;

32. *Recalls* resolution 54/82 B of 6 December 1999, by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to study ways and means of rationalizing and effecting equitable disbursement of available resources to United Nations information centres, notes with great concern the existing imbalance in the available resources to United Nations information centres in developing and developed countries and that, given the importance of this matter, more information is needed, and requests the Secretary-General to examine the situation thoroughly, taking into account all relevant factors, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session;

33. *Requests* the Secretary-General to look into the possibility of appointing directors to those United Nations information centres that are not yet integrated and are under the temporary management of offices of the United Nations Development Programme to ensure the autonomous status of the centres;

34. *Welcomes* the action taken by some Member States with regard to providing financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals, and invites the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to consult Member States, where appropriate, on the possibility of providing the centres with additional voluntary support on a national basis, bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial requirements for the United Nations information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

35. *Recognizes* the continuing enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials, and requests the Secretary-General to report on those activities;

36. *Expresses* its full support for wide, accurate, equal and prompt coverage of United Nations activities

through the continuation and improvement of United Nations press releases, which should bring out the intergovernmental aspect of the Organization's work and deliberations, stresses the importance of having these press releases issued in all official languages of the United Nations, and requests other relevant bodies of the General Assembly to give due consideration to this matter;

37. *Stresses* that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/44 B;

38. *Encourages* an increase in the number of programmes of United Nations radio, in all available languages, on the United Nations web site;

39. *Takes note* of the efforts under way by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages, and, in that regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

40. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to include in its radio and television programming specific programmes addressing the needs of developing nations;

41. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983 with regard to the introduction of full programming in French and Creole in the work programme of the Caribbean Unit of United Nations Radio;

42. *Welcomes* the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project for the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations[16] and the redeployment of the necessary resources for this purpose;

43. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session a progress report on the results of the implementation of the pilot project, and declares its intention to examine before the end of 2001 and upon submission by the Secretary-General of his report, the final report on the results of the project with a view to taking a decision on the matter during its fifty-sixth session;

44. *Urges* the Secretary-General to maintain and strengthen the managerial capacity, staff resources, programme output and means of delivery of United Nations radio in the six official languages and, if feasible, in other languages, in order to ensure the success of the radio pilot project and, to this end, enhance coordination with the United Nations News Centre and the United Nations information centres, as well as the cooperation with national and international radio organizations in Member States;

45. *Underlines* the continuing importance of using traditional and mass media channels to disseminate information on the United Nations, and encourages the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technologies, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

46. *Takes note* of the efforts by some United Nations information centres to establish their own Web pages in local languages, and, in this respect, encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to United Nations information centres whose Web pages are not yet operational, to develop Web pages in the respective local languages in their host countries;

47. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to coordinate and rationalize the content of Web pages of United Nations information centres using the same language in order to enhance the information services with a view to avoiding overlap and repetition;

48. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations web sites,[17] encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to develop and enhance the United Nations web sites in all the official languages of the Organization, and requests him to continue to develop proposals for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session, keeping in mind the building of

modular parity, which should ultimately lead to achieving full parity among the official languages of the United Nations;

49. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report, in accordance with paragraph 48 above, guidelines for content planning and publication on the United Nations web sites;

50. *Stresses* the importance of access to the United Nations treaty collection and the United Nations parliamentary documentation for the public, and commends the initiative of the Secretary-General to make the parliamentary documentation of the Organization available through the United Nations web site in all the official languages;

51. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Department of Public Information for conducting the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, and calls for its further expansion so as to include a larger number of trainees from those countries;

52. *Acknowledges* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues;

53. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours and to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up-to-date, relevant and technologically innovative as possible;

54. *Recalls* its resolutions concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, in particular resolutions 51/138 B of 13 December 1996 and 52/172 of 16 December 1997, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the consequences of that disaster;

55. *Recalls also* its resolution 53/1 H of 16 November 1998, concerning international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, which has been affected by nuclear tests, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the problems and needs of the Semipalatinsk region;

56. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/59 B of 3 December 1998 and 54/82 B, and urges the Department of Public Information to take the necessary measures, through the provision of relevant and objective information, towards achieving the major objectives set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa,[18] and to publicize the activities of the open-ended working group established for that purpose;

57. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

58. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session;

59. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Draft decision

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 95 to 97 members and to appoint Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee on Information.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/36/21); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigendum (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigenda (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/39/21); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/40/21); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement*

No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/43/21); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/44/21); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/45/21); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/46/21); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/47/21); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/48/21); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/49/21); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/50/21); and ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/51/21).

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[4] Ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21/Rev.1).

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/54/21/Rev.1).

[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/55/21).

[7] A/54/415.

[8] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

[9] A/AC.198/2000/2.

[10] A/AC.198/2000/8.

[11] A/AC.198/2000/10.

[12] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21), sect. III.D, recommendation 36.

[13] A/AC.198/2000/3, A/AC.198/2000/4 and A/AC.198/2000/5.

[14] A/AC.198/2000/3.

[15] A/AC.198/2000/4.

[16] A/AC.198/2000/6.

[17] A/AC.198/2000/7-A/AC.172/2000/4.

[18] A/52/871-S/1998/318.

Annex I

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the opening of the twenty-second session of the Committee on Information

1. It is a pleasure and an honour for me to again address the Committee on Information as it begins its twenty-second session. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected Rapporteur, Mr. Yayan Mulyana of Indonesia. At the same time, I must pay tribute to the outgoing Rapporteur of the Committee, Mr. Sidharto Reza Suryo-di-Puro of Indonesia, who has served impressively on the Bureau for several years, and I wish him every success in his new assignment.

2. Allow me also to thank our distinguished Chairman, Mr. Elhassane Zahid, as well as other members of the Bureau for their efforts which have led to the further strengthening of the spirit of cooperation between the Committee and the Department in the pursuit of our common objectives. I look forward to the deliberations at this year's session and hope to receive continued guidance for the future direction of the Department, in the spirit of consensus which has prevailed in the Committee's work.

3. I have kept the Committee informed of the many actions under way to reorient the activities of the Department of Public Information in pursuit of the reform-related objectives of the Organization set by the Secretary-General. The nine reports before you, prepared at the request of the General Assembly and this Committee, spell out the nature of these reforms, and also provide details about other specific aspects of the work of the Department.

4. All these efforts have been guided by the leadership of the Secretary-General and his clear recognition of the central role that public information and communications play in the work of the Organization as a whole. At a time when the Secretary-General is giving priority to reshaping and repositioning the United Nations to meet the demands of a world not merely international, but compellingly global in character, the Department of Public Information must respond effectively to this shift. As a result, the Department is developing creative strategies and new partnerships, and fully utilizing modern information technology with a view to better connecting the Organization with all the peoples of the world, a goal that I know this Committee is strongly committed to as well.

5. Let me point to one major set of activities that the Department has just undertaken that capture the essence of the changes under way to make our efforts truly global. Four weeks ago today, the Secretary-General presented his milestone millennium report to the General Assembly. As befitted the release of such an important document, all arms of the Department were mobilized to ensure the widest possible outreach for it. But at the same time, we undertook a number of unprecedented actions designed to more effectively bring the Secretary-General's message to people in all the world's regions.

6. One of these innovations was the decision to broadcast live by satellite the Secretary-General's speech and press conference to media worldwide and, through videoconferencing, to special gatherings arranged by the United Nations information centres in 10 locations around the world. Among such high-level gatherings was the one in Lomé, chaired by the Prime Minister of Togo. For both these informal gatherings and for the broadcasters receiving satellite television feeds, arrangements were made for remote interpretation of the Secretary-General's press conference in the six official languages.

7. Another action concerned the embargoed background briefings that are now regularly organized for Headquarters-based correspondents in advance of any important event. Exploiting the very affordable communication technology now available, we offered four additional teleconferenced background briefings by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, for editorial writers, columnists and reporters from each of the other regions: Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

8. The impact of all these efforts was clearly reflected in the media coverage that ensued — a remarkable and unprecedented amount, I might add, for such a report. More than 25 major television broadcasting organizations and news distributors, such as the Cable News Network (CNN), the American

Broadcasting Corporation, Reuters Television and Associated Press Television — carried the Secretary-General's statement or its highlights. Arrangements were also made with the European Broadcasting Union, which kindly carried the entire statement and the press conference live, and 15 of whose members — who, of course, extend beyond Europe — used portions of it. Télé Liban, Al-Jazeera and the South African Broadcasting Corporation also carried live broadcasts of both the statement and the press conference. In addition, United Nations Radio provided coverage and dissemination of the report of the Secretary-General to 37 radio stations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, North and South America, and the Caribbean in six languages.

9. Information centres, which played a key role in the launch, reported that more than 66 television and 92 radio programmes in 29 countries covered the launch, in addition to over 280 newspaper articles published in 58 countries, based on the press materials provided and disseminated globally by the Department.

10. The Millennium Summit and Assembly will provide the Department with further unique opportunities to build broad-based, genuinely global support for the Organization's goals. In addition to using the Millennium Summit and Assembly to project these goals, the Department is also concentrating its efforts on the development of a promotional campaign that will use the occasion of the new millennium to project the many accomplishments and capacities of our Organization.

11. Using the strong, proactive slogan "The UN works", the campaign will be centred on telling the United Nations story to a broad range of audiences in a simple, appealing way. This innovative campaign will primarily use visual images, such as posters displayed in public venues and in television and radio public service announcements, to illustrate how the United Nations works to fight poverty and disease, promote peace, development and women's equality, and protect the environment, for example. Some materials will show ordinary people whose lives have been positively affected, while others may feature local or international celebrities. All materials will prominently direct the viewer to a special web page that will highlight real stories of how the United Nations has made a difference in peoples' lives. "The UN works" approach will be incorporated into many promotional materials and events for the 2000-2001 period, produced both at Headquarters and by the United Nations information centres in the field.

12. As indicated earlier, a major goal of our current focus is to strengthen our media outreach globally. In that context, you will be pleased to know that a major effort is also under way to develop an integrated, multimedia news operation that will deliver United Nations news directly to media organizations worldwide. The Department currently produces excellent news-oriented materials in each of the traditional media, but we need, as is the case with the media that we are trying to serve, to adopt an integrated approach encompassing the four strands of television, radio, print and the Internet. The integrated output will be the ultimate goal of the United Nations News Service, which we hope to launch later this year. The News Service initially will deliver, via electronic mail and, where necessary, by facsimile, the most important United Nations news development of the day, and indicate the availability of audio and visual materials. The News Service will be organized along regional and thematic lines, to ensure that most elements of the news are of direct interest to recipients. Media in developing countries with limited means for direct United Nations coverage have expressed particular enthusiasm about this forthcoming service.

13. In this regard, I should mention that we inaugurated about six months ago the United Nations News Centre on the United Nations web site on the Internet. Our stories are posted as they occur throughout the day. This initiative has proved to be a popular and effective gateway to United Nations news, providing daily coverage across the whole spectrum of the system's activities, and becoming the primary source of some news stories for the media.

14. As part of this more regional orientation, the Department is also proposing to station, on an experimental basis, one television and radio producer in the field in order to both maximize links with regional media and have greater input from the field for our Headquarters productions which are disseminated globally. We have chosen Africa as the first base for this proposed pilot project, given the high priority attached to the continent by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretary-General and virtually all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

15. As you know, the Department of Public Information has conducted two extremely successful high-level briefing programmes for senior United States editorial writers who travelled to United Nations Headquarters at their own expense. The Department is grateful to the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the heads of the United Nations funds and programmes and most senior Under-Secretaries-General for their participation, which accounted for the outstanding and supportive array of articles that appeared nationwide in papers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.

16. I am now pleased to report that we have secured extrabudgetary resources that will permit us to undertake two similar programmes for a group of journalists from Africa and Asia. We hope to raise funds to organize a similar exercise for journalists from the Latin American and Caribbean region next year.

17. Efforts have also continued to improve the facilities for resident international journalists at other major duty stations. For example, at the United Nations Office at Vienna, important improvements to the press working area have been made since April 1999. Efforts are also continuing to secure additional office space for accredited journalists.

18. Let me now turn to the major effort that is currently under way in United Nations Radio. As this Committee has regularly stressed, and as indicated by Member States in General Assembly resolution 54/82 B adopted last year, "radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information". I am pleased to state therefore that the Department will take a dramatic step forward this year towards disseminating directly to radio stations around the world news of major United Nations developments in the six official languages. Reflecting our commitment to the project is the fact that we have redeployed for it US$ 1,760,300 from the Department's approved programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

19. As the report of the pilot project for the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2000/6) that is before you indicates, this challenging undertaking would not have been possible without a series of airtime partnerships that we have established with local, national and international radio stations and networks in all regions. So far, over 100 stations in 58 countries have expressed a clear interest in this new project. Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to extend the Department's appreciation to all those Member States that have supported this effort. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate my call to the distinguished members of the Committee on Information and to Member States at large to provide contributions, in cash or in kind, to strengthen and sustain this undertaking.

20. Our wide outreach for television, including on the weekly CNN programme "World Report", is well known to you. But major challenges loom in particular for this medium, which is being transformed by rapid changes in technology. In just five years, for example, we will have to ensure that our overall television operation converts to the digital standard that will become mandatory in the industry, a not inexpensive operation. I am proposing a comprehensive study of the technology requirements of the Department, not just in television but across all the media, so that we can draw a road map of where we want to go and ensure that our capital equipment plans and training programme are tailored accordingly. Our aim is, and will continue to be, to ensure that we can reach audiences in each region in the most efficient and appropriate technology available to it.

21. Our focus on these traditional media, to which we allocate more than 90 per cent of our resources, in no way undermines our commitment to fully exploit the powerful reach and impact of the Internet. As far as resources permit, we are posting on the Internet our products in all the traditional media. In fact, audio-visual products are rapidly becoming an indispensable feature of the Internet. We are, of course, fully aware that Internet access emanates principally from the industrialized world, but the day is not too far distant when this medium will become a wide bandwidth channel for delivering top-quality sound and pictures into living rooms around the world. We want to be ready to capitalize on this opportunity when it comes.

22. The popularity of the United Nations web site continues to grow at a phenomenal pace. Today, the United Nations web site routinely receives over 1 million visits daily, with a year 2000 projection of over 300 million visits from 148 countries. The Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management remains a crucial partner for us in this area and in all other technological

innovations undertaken by the Department of Public Information.

23. Over the past few months, the United Nations web site has added a considerable wealth of material in all official languages. New sites that have recently gone online include the Millennium Summit, Bethlehem 2000 and Decolonization. A new site will shortly be launched to publicize the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

24. Also, all resolutions of the Security Council are now available through the United Nations web site. A new Documentation Centre consolidates all available parliamentary documents by principal organs. By the end of the year, it is expected that all parliamentary documentation will be made available through a redesigned interface, which will significantly enhance access.

25. The Department is now in the process of completely redesigning the main portal page of the web site consistent with the concept of equal treatment of all official languages, as well as to make it more user-friendly. We are also working with other departments within the Secretariat to further develop the policy aspect of the Organization's Internet activity. The one challenge that is difficult to negotiate, however, is language parity, given the extensive resource requirements of this endeavour. The report of the Secretary-General on the development of a multilingual web site that is before the Committee (A/AC.198/2000/7) provides a snapshot of the current situation and presents a course of possible action.

26. We have seen the establishment of five large United Nations peacekeeping and political missions since the Committee met last year. All of them include a public information component, and backstopping these components has become a major activity of the Department. In March, for example, a "needs assessment" team was sent to Sierra Leone to strengthen the public information component of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, which will include a radio station, using the equipment for the station previously operated as part of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic.

27. With regard to information activities on the question of Palestine, the Department produced a new photo exhibit, "The United Nations and the question of Palestine", which opened in December and is now part of the guided tour route. A French version of the exhibit will be displayed at UNESCO headquarters later this month. The Department is also working on the campaign aimed at publicizing this month the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. In December 1999, the training of six Palestinian journalists was completed following two months of briefings and workshops at Headquarters, at CNN in Atlanta and at Columbia University.

28. Working closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information developed and implemented information strategies leading to the two special sessions of the General Assembly scheduled to take place next month: on women and on social development, respectively. The creation of special web pages on those upcoming events was a new feature used by the Department to increase awareness of the issues before both events.

29. The Department has also focused its efforts on issues relating to human rights, including the 2001 World Conference against Racism, through close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have also highlighted activities related to the Secretary-General's initiatives towards business and on the renewed role of the Economic and Social Council.

30. The Department continues to enhance its partnership with civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations. These organizations are seeking association with the Department of Public Information in growing numbers. Since December, 59 organizations from 18 countries have received associate status. The association of non-governmental organizations from Eastern Europe, and, increasingly, from developing countries, is an encouraging sign of the growth of the community of non-governmental organizations in those regions.

31. The Department is providing non-governmental organizations with increased opportunities to upgrade their capacity to disseminate information and participate in the work of the Organization through our enhanced web sites dedicated to our NGO partners. Last December, we also initiated a series of quarterly communications workshops that provide hands-on and practical information on new information technology, new and traditional means of communications and other means of strengthening existing partnerships.

32. The fifty-third annual DPI/NGO conference, scheduled to take place at Headquarters from 28 to 30 August 2000, will focus on "Global solidarity: the way to peace and international cooperation". The conference is seen as a bridge event between the Millennium Forum of civil society, to be held later in May, and the Millennium Summit in September and will emphasize the growing partnerships between the United Nations and civil society.

33. The Organization also continues to provide information directly to the public through a number of activities, including, increasingly, videoconferences directly connecting the United Nations with students, and through the guided tour and briefing programme. We are working also with the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) to develop model United Nations video and curriculum materials aimed at enhancing the simulation and learning experience offered by the model United Nations programmes and expanding it throughout North America and beyond. The Department now hosts annual educators' and students' conferences, to provide teachers and students with opportunities to learn first-hand about the United Nations and its teaching resources.

34. The Department also continues to organize special events and exhibits on mandated themes, such as the observance last December of World AIDS Day, Earth Day a few weeks ago, and World Environment Day in June.

35. Our annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries has been valuable in building a network of media professionals in the field who can help raise awareness of the work of the United Nations in the developing world. To date, 303 journalists from 133 countries have taken part in the programme, and on 3 May we will be marking the twentieth anniversary of its establishment at our annual observance of World Press Freedom Day.

36. The United Nations World Television Forum is now recognized as a major event for the discussion of international broadcasting issues. This year's forum will address the convergence between television and the Internet and look at ways to bridge the "digital divide" as a means of spurring economic growth.

37. Taking advantage of technological innovations in the field of publishing, the Department has streamlined its recurrent publications through electronic means, replacing their earlier "stand alone" character and transforming them into widely accessible sources of information about the United Nations. We have also embarked upon a project to put the history of the Organization, mirrored in the first 50 volumes of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* on CD-ROM. Additionally, through an innovative partnership arrangement with the World Bank, *Development Business* is now not only "online" but is also generating revenues through subscriptions to its electronic edition. Both the *UN Chronicle* and *Africa Recovery* have enhanced their web pages.

38. We have progress to report on our recurrent publications. In the past year, we have bridged the earlier cumulative backlog of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*. The *UN Chronicle* continues to be a forum of fact, opinion and debate related to the United Nations system, attracting an increasing number of distinguished contributors, and testimony from policy makers and general audiences alike has been received on the impact made by the magazine *Africa Recovery* to an understanding of developments in Africa and of United Nations work on the continent.

39. In March, the Department also organized an interdepartmental, inter-agency meeting on cartography and geographic information science. This event was the culmination of several years of effort to bring together colleagues within the United Nations system to address common issues affecting the work of the Organization in these fields and to take steps towards the establishment of system-wide policies and procedures regarding the handling of geographic information.

40. In the field of sales and marketing of publications, the Department is capitalizing on electronic technology to enhance dissemination and sales. In March, for example, the United Nations treaty collection was launched as a subscription item in cooperation with the Office of Legal Affairs. In accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly, the new service provides subscribers with instant access to the Organization's vast collection of international treaties. The project offers free access to Governments, specialized agencies and certain depository libraries, while at the same time generating subscription income from other customers. Special rates are provided for developing countries and not-for-profit organizations. The renovation of the United Nations Bookshop has paid immediate dividends, with annual sales for 1999 being the second highest ever.

41. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is pleased to announce the public launching of UNBISNET. Through this new service, the Library's major databases — including bibliographic files, voting records and index to speeches — are now available on a web platform. Starting in December 1999, access has been provided to the traditional user groups. As of this month, UNBISNET is available to depository libraries and will shortly be opened up to the general public.

42. In order to facilitate multilingual subject access to its own and other United Nations databases, including the optical disk system, the Library is engaged in the translation of the *UNBIS Thesaurus*, already available in English, French and Spanish, into the remaining official languages.

43. The United Nations Consortium, an inter-agency activity coordinated by the Library, continues to grow: it currently has 37 members and offers products from 13 vendors. With the recent addition of the joint library of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund, some products now reach a potential audience of over more than 65,000.

44. As part of its effort to strengthen the United Nations connection to civil society partners, the Library enhanced, through increased training and dissemination activities, its outreach programme for depository libraries, which at present number 384 institutions in 143 countries and territories. In cooperation with United Nations information centres and services, four regional workshops were organized for depository librarians in developing countries, with emphasis on hands-on training in the use of United Nations resources on the Internet. Two additional workshops will be held this year: in Moscow in May, for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and in Islamabad in August, for south-west Asia.

45. With regard to the network of United Nations information centres, services and offices, I am also pleased to report considerable progress in the application of technological innovations, which have had a major impact on our operations in all regions. The establishment of electronic mail links with all centres has speeded up the transmission and dissemination of information, a development much appreciated by the local media. Thirty centres so far have created their own web sites in 15 languages.

46. With in-depth knowledge of their region, staff of United Nations information centres adapt and relate United Nations messages to the local context. Their close relationship with the national and regional media, fostered by years of cooperation, secures impressive coverage of United Nations initiatives, as recently demonstrated in connection with the launch of the Secretary-General's millennium report.

47. For the United Nations information centres, rapid communication through electronic mail has afforded new opportunities to share translation capabilities available locally to translate materials produced at Headquarters in English.

48. As you have seen in the reports of the Secretary-General that are before you (A/AC.198/2000/3-A/AC.198/2000/5), strengthening of the relationship between the Department and the UNDP is one of our priorities. This partnership is now being reinvigorated with the full support of the new Administrator of UNDP. United Nations information centres, whether headed by a resident coordinator or a director from the Department of Public Information, are part of the country team in most countries, and often spearhead the development of national information strategies for the United Nations family as a whole. In this regard, the Department and UNDP jointly organized last March in New York the first ever, and very productive meeting of centre directors, which brought them together with UNDP resident coordinators for three days of discussions.

49. In conclusion, I am looking forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions for helping the Department of Public Information to better communicate the universal message of the United Nations to the global audience. Our session this year has a special significance in that your recommendations will be considered at the Millennium Assembly and will therefore make an important contribution to shaping the role of our Organization in the twenty-first century.

Annex II

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the twenty-second session of the Committee

1. The twenty-second session of the Committee on Information should mark an important stage in the history of the Committee and its contribution to making sure that the voice of the United Nations resounds clearly throughout the world. Indeed, the outcome of our session of the year 2000 and the recommendations that we make between now and 12 May will be transmitted to the Millennium Assembly, which will open on 15 September and which will discuss the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. With this in mind, our work should have historic significance, since it will influence the Organization's public information policy for the next century, a century in which, to quote the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, humanity has come out of the "international" age and entered the "global" age.

2. Given the importance that the Millennium Summit and Assembly will have for the future of the Organization, the Bureau of this Committee has been kept regularly informed by Mr. Kensaku Hogen, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, about the strategy implemented by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat in order to make sure that the Millennium Summit has broad support from international public opinion.

3. Considering that the millennium promotional campaign is the main priority of the year 2000, the Bureau wanted the Committee to be officially seized of the issue in order to discuss it at the present session. We therefore asked the Secretariat, in February, to prepare a supplementary report on the millennium promotional campaign. That report is contained in document A/AC.198/2000/10 and it will certainly be an important basis for our general debate, at this time and in the context of the General Assembly, when delegations are preparing for the deliberations of the Millennium Summit and Assembly.

4. The Committee will continue its efforts to enhance the action of the Department of Public Information to mobilize the peoples of the United Nations on behalf of the Organization and its goals. To that end, eight other reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department have been submitted to the Committee. The report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications provides, to some extent, the conceptual framework for all the others and consideration of that report will therefore be a priority for the Committee. The report, which was circulated in good time, reviews the reorientation and shows that the Secretariat has taken advantage of the guidelines it was given by our Committee in the area of public information.

5. The Department's programme for this year and the next and the human and financial resources for implementing it were approved by the General Assembly on 23 December 1999 in its resolution 54/249 concerning questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. (Part VII of the proposed programme budget covers section 26, Public information). Thus the Department has been given financial resources by the Member States and we can expect that all the mandates entrusted to it will be implemented.

6. As to the future, the General Assembly has given the Department of Public Information, in that resolution and in resolution 54/82 B of 6 December 1999 concerning questions relating to information: United Nations public information policies and activities, guidelines concerning the priority areas of its future activities. The Committee should therefore strive to help the Department in its efforts to conform to them and carry out, in an even more effective and coordinated fashion, the public information policy in the context outlined by the Member States.

7. Lastly, I should like to mention the issue of our Committee's working methods. In the report on its twenty-first session (A/54/21), the Committee proposed that the open-ended working group should continue to be active between sessions. In order to implement this proposal, I wrote to the members of the Committee on 23 February, asking them to suggest topics for discussion by the working group.

8. Limited interest was expressed in this process; only six members of the Committee replied to my letter proposing possible topics for discussion (they were different topics from the ones proposed by the Bureau).

Under the circumstances and bearing in mind also the diversity of the topics suggested, the Bureau deemed that none of the topics had aroused sufficient interest to justify convening a meeting of the open-ended working group. Thus on 3 April, I again wrote to all the members of the Committee, informing them that the Bureau had concluded that delegations would have an opportunity to ask the Department of Information any questions they wished at the session which opens today, both during the informal briefing that the Department will hold this afternoon in room 7 and during the debates on our recommendations to the General Assembly in the context of item 8 of our agenda, "informal consultations of the open-ended working group of the Committee on Information."

9. I therefore invite all delegations, particularly those which did suggest topics for discussion, to make full use of these two opportunities for discussion and to do so starting this afternoon at the informal briefing, which I hope many delegations will attend.

10. It will be up to the members of the Committees, following the twenty-second session, to conclude whether these mechanisms have sufficed for the in-depth and regular debate which some delegations wished to pursue by means of meetings between sessions.

11. As for this session, I should like to ask for your opinion about a new working method.

12. I have noted that after the general debate the Committee moves on to consultations on the conclusions and recommendations it submits to the General Assembly. Accordingly, the numerous and valuable reports submitted by the Department are never thoroughly considered. I therefore propose to make time for consideration of these reports and of the conclusions and recommendations they contain so that they may be incorporated into our conclusions and recommendations.

13. I should like to have a brief discussion on this to see whether we can change our working methods or whether we prefer to continue doing as we have done until now.

Annex III

Letter dated 12 May 2000 from the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Information

I have the honour to refer to the draft report of the of the Committee on Information on its twenty-second session as contained in document A/AC.198/2000/L.3 dated 11 May 2000.

I have been informed that, further to informal consultations, it will be proposed that in paragraph 43, the word "enhance" would be replaced by the word "strengthen".

In this connection, I should like to inform you that this change of words, if and when approved by the Committee, would not need any additional financial resources from the Department of Public Information.

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